From: Glenn Holmer
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/26/02 6:09am
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

Dear Sirs:

I am writing in reference to the proposed settlement in the Microsoft antitrust case. I am a professional programmer with 15 years experience, covering numerous operating systems, computer architectures, and programming languages.

I do not feel that the proposed remedies are adequate in the area of documentation. In order to remedy Microsoft's past behavior and prevent it from occurring in the future, the government needs to require that *all* programming interfaces be made public. This includes not only operating system APIs, but networking protocols and file formats as well. (I do not think Microsoft should be required to make its source code public; the implementation details of these interfaces are what make one company stand out with a superior product, and should be protected if the company wishes them to remain proprietary.)

Section III.E of the proposed judgement does not go far enough. All networking protocols must be made public (not just licensed) in order to make sure that server products designed to work with Windows (especially Open Source projects like the Samba project, http://samba.org) do not face a barrier to entry. It is crucial that the Justice Department take a stand in this area now, before Microsoft is allowed to gain an illegal advantage in the emerging area of web services with its .NET technology.

The proposed judgement does not mention disclosure of the formats for data files created by Microsoft applications. As the Findings of Fact notes in section III.B.1.39, "the size of Windows' installed base impels ISVs to write applications first and foremost to Windows". File formats must be made public in order to reduce barriers to entry in the area of productivity applications, specifically word processors, spreadsheets, etc. designed to be compatible with Microsoft Office (for example, Star Office: http://www.sun.com/software/star/staroffice). I can cite personal experience in this area, as job recruiters in my field nearly always require resumes in Microsoft Word format.

Unless stronger measures than those proposed are taken in these areas, I feel that the government's considerable efforts in addressing these issues will have been wasted. Microsoft will still be able to compete on the basis of the quality of its products compared to those of other companies, but if the remedies are not stronger, that competition will never get a chance to exist.

(Note: the address I am mailing from is my home e-mail; my business
e-mail is listed in the reply-to header and below.)

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